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FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

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SUBJECT: USUNESCO GUIDANCE REQUEST: TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY AND ICT DEVELOPMENT - A UNESCO OPPORTUNITY.

[11.](#) (SBU) SUMMARY AND GUIDANCE REQUEST: The UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), a UNESCO program established by

the United States in the early 1980s to support the free flow of information in developing countries, will hold elections to its bureau in March 2006. Mission has identified this UNESCO program -- with a proven track record of developing independent local media -- as an ideal conduit for supporting the Secretary's transformational diplomacy agenda. The U.S., already a member of the IPDC council, now has the opportunity to run for its bureau, which makes all decisions on IPDC priorities and grants. The high impact on democracy of these low-cost grants was underscored by African Ambassadors to UNESCO in a January 20 meeting with Ambassador David Gross, U.S. Coordinator for International Communication and Information Policy and U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO Louise V. Oliver (reported septel). Mission requests guidance from IO/UNESCO, in coordination with relevant offices, on whether to pursue election to the IPDC bureau. (There is only one 'group one' slot, and the Netherlands is now considering a bid for it. Unless we are willing to pony up resources to take on the job, it does not make sense to knock one of the program's largest contributor's out of the running. The Netherlands may go ahead with its candidacy if we do not coordinate with them by the January 27.) Mission requests examples of what the USG can bring to the table in terms of governmental and private sector funding. END SUMMARY AND GUIDANCE REQUEST.

WHAT IS THE IPDC?

[12.](#) (U) The IPDC is the only multilateral forum in the UN system designed to mobilize the international community to discuss and promote media development in developing countries. It provides support for media projects while seeking agreement to secure a healthy environment for the growth of free and pluralistic media in developing countries. Over the last 25 years, the IPDC focused its projects on the most urgent priorities in communication development. The efforts of the IPDC have had an important impact on a broad range of fields covering, among others, the promotion of media independence and pluralism, development of community media, radio and television organizations, modernization of national and regional news agencies, and training of media professionals. The IPDC continues today to use small grants generally ranging from 20,000 USD to 100,000 USD to empower people to gain equitable access to knowledge and express themselves through free and pluralistic media. In all, the IPDC has mobilized some US\$ 90 million for over 1000 projects in 139 developing countries and countries in transition since the early 1980s.

[13.](#) (U) Many Ambassadors and secretariat staff at UNESCO report that this kind of multilateral cooperation is effective for promoting media development. For example, some NGOs and community groups might be uncomfortable accepting grants directly from certain countries for political reasons, or for fear that the public will perceive their objectivity as compromised. Grants from UNESCO's IPDC program have no such baggage.

DONATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

[14.](#) (SBU) Most G-8 Countries, the Netherlands and the Nordics are the current lead donor nations to the IPDC. Their total contributions over the 25-year history of the program, range from Germany's contribution of 23 million USD to the Netherlands' contribution of 2 Million USD. The U.S. total contribution over the same period (during which we were absent for 20 years) is approximately 500,000 USD. The Netherlands is considering running for the Group 1 seat: Unless we are willing to pony up resources, it does not make sense to knock one of the program's largest contributor's out of the running.

[15.](#) (SBU) The Nordic nations, which have historically taken an active role in the IPDC, also completed a study of the program in 2002 and under the active leadership of the current IPDC President, Torben

Krough, Chairman of the Danish National Committee to UNESCO, have implemented them. IPDC now gives priority to projects promoting press freedom and media pluralism, development of community media, enhancing professional capacity and building partnerships for media improvements. It meets bi-annually while its Bureau, which Mission proposes running for, is assigned to take full responsibility in selecting and financing projects. The reforms also allowed UNESCO Advisers based in field offices to assume greater responsibilities to realize more effective quality media development projects that empower people to gain equitable access to knowledge and express themselves through free and pluralistic media. One such program is an Afghan Women's community radio station (Voice of Afghan Women), to which the USG donated 60,000 USD after re-joining UNESCO. The station now covers 5 provinces and has received a TV frequency as well.

16. (SBU) In a January 20 meeting with Ambassador Gross and Ambassador Oliver reported septel, several African Ambassadors cited the high impact of the IPDC's grant programs, in particular, the effectiveness of community radio. One feature of community radio stations is call in shows where the announcer responds to requests for information by searching the Internet and broadcasting the information found. This helps to bridge two "digital opportunity" challenges: illiteracy, and access to material in non-ASCII languages on the Internet. It also makes it possible for someone with no electricity, just a cell phone and battery operated radio, to access the Internet.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: We note the Secretary's statement that "transformational diplomacy is rooted in partnership, not paternalism . . . we seek to use America's power to help foreign citizens better their own lives and transform their own futures" The IPDC is an ideal means to deploy technology, leverage the UNESCO commitment to the free flow of information, and support high-impact low-cost ICT programs to empower people to build democracy and prosperity - community by community - worldwide. END COMMENT.

Oliver